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AUTHOR Patton, Michael J.
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ABSTRACT

In terms of clinical practice, few differences exist between Freud and Heinz Kohut in the conduct of psychoanalysis. Kohut's style of theorizing facilitates the use of his ideas by counseling psychologists for both research and practice. According to Kohut's theory, the self is the fundamental constituent of mind. Development of the self proceeds along three lines: grandiosity, alter ego, and idealization. A self-selfobject relation is a representation of self and other in which the other is experienced as a vital part of the self, as a structure which sustains the cohesion of the child and the adult self. Defects in the self can reside in the grandiose, alter ego, or idealizing self-selfobject relation. The relevance of Kohut's ideas for research in counseling psychology is evident in four studies: (1) development of 10 rating scales for one of the five dimensions of the multivariate model of counseling from the Utah Counseling Outcomes Project; (2) development of two 10-item self-report scales using the concept of grandiosity and idealization; (3) construction of three self-report scales using Kohut's concept of the self-selfobject relation; and (4) development of two self-report scales using concepts of grandiosity and idealization to study adolescent narcissism. While all the scales require further psychometric work, they suggest that Kohut's theory affords the researchers in counseling psychology a clinically relevant guide to the formulation of empirically answerable questions about counselors, clients, and the counseling process. (NB)

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The Relevance of Kohut's Self Psychology to Theory and Research in Counseling Psychology*

Michael J. Patton

The University of Tennessee

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The Relevance of Kohut's Self Psychology to Theory and Research in Counseling Psychology

The task of this presentation is to illustrate the contribution of Heinz Kohut's psychoanalytic self-psychology to theory and research in counseling psychology. This will be attempted in several ways. First, a few remarks of a biographical nature about Kohut will be made. Then, the central concepts, relations and processes of Kohut's (1984; 1977; 1971) psychoanalytic self-psychology; i.e., his theory of the self, will be presented in broad outline. Last, a program of scale construction that we have had underway for a number of years will be described. In this research we have tried to extrapolate from Kohut's theory to the assessment of client characteristics and the investigation of counseling processes.

About Kohut

The late Heinz Kohut was both a psychoanalytic theorist and a practicing and supervising analyst with the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute. Kohut was born in Austria and emigrated to this country shortly following WWII. He completed medical school in Chicago and entered psychoanalytic training at the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute. As his career developed, first along traditional classical psychoanalytic lines, he engaged in private practice, and in the training of other analysts. He offered leadership to the American and the International Psychoanalytic Associations, and was elected President of the American Psychoanalytic Association. In the late 1950's and the

early 1960's he began writing a series of clinical and theoretical papers, some of which addressed traditional issues and problems in psychoanalytic theory and practice, and some of which began to extend Freud's ideas about the role of narcissism in personality development (cf. Kohut, 1978).

In 1971 he published his first major work, entitled The Analysis of the Self. This work drew the attention of the psychoanalytic establishment, and much of it was controversial. It also signaled the beginning of a new trend in psychoanalytic theorizing. This trend has not only resulted in a marked departure from the classical theory, but, in my opinion, has also added significantly to the growing reapproachement between psychoanalysis and American psychology.

An important reason for the interest of psychologists in Kohut's work is his use of the concept of the self and its developmental vicissitudes. The centrality Kohut gives to the self in his theory, and the relatively simple language he uses to construct theory, provide a bridge for the empirically oriented, but, as yet, psychoanalytically uninformed, counseling psychologist to use in understanding psychoanalytic theory. For now, let it be said that the major theoretical differences between Kohut and Freud are in their use of structural and motivational concepts. With Kohut there are no macrostructures of the mind (i.e., id, ego and superego), and no drives (i.e., libido and aggression).

Rather, Kohut (1977) posits the self as the superordinate center of the personality, and makes narcissism the normal expression of the self, rather than a pathological trend in the personality. However, in terms of clinical practice, there are relatively few differences between Freud and Kohut in the conduct of psychoanalysis. Yet, it is Kohut's style of theorizing that facilitates the use of his ideas by counseling psychologists for both research and practice. Before discussing the relevance of his ideas for research, it would be well to briefly outline the major concepts, relations and processes of his theory for those who may be unfamiliar with them.

Kohut's Psychology of the Self

Kohut's (1984; 1977; 1971) theory at the beginning was embedded in classical psychoanalytic theory. In his first book, the self was seen both as the center of the personality and as a content of the ego. Now, however, the current form of the theory makes it collateral to the classical Freudian formulations. Kohut's (1971) earlier position about the self vis a vis the ego was a logical contrary that he seems to have later recognized (cf. Kohut, 1985, 1981, 1971; Patton and Sullivan, 1980). This is to say, it is illogical to posit, on the one hand, that the self is the superordinate, organizing center of the personality, and on the other, to also say that it is a content of the ego that is subject to the influence of the drives. This would make the part equal to the whole.

Kohut (1977, 1984) corrects the logical trouble by writing a theory that is collateral to the classical Freudian formulations. Thus, he was not in open revolt against traditional psychoanalysis. In his theory, the self is the fundamental constituent of mind. Figure 1 is an outline of Kohut's theory

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place Figure 1 here

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from early childhood to adulthood.

At about 18 months of age, the self becomes consolidated as a cohesive, psychological structure that now contains the previously fragmented mental representations through which the child experienced the world. This fragile and archaic structure consists of three important mental representations that Kohut refers to as "the grandiose infantile self", the "alter ego", and the "idealized parental imago". These three representations are called self selfobject relations. Through them the child experiences itself in relation to others. A self-selfobject relation is a representation of self and other in which the other is experienced as a vital part of the self, as a structure which sustains the cohesion of the child and adult self.

With the grandiose infantile self the toddler experiences him or herself as the powerful center of its universe. This universe is one in which the child believes, on the one hand, that it is entitled to the uninterrupted expression of its omnipotence, and entitled, on the other, to the constant

mirroring approval of its caretakers. The idealized parental imago permits the child to experience itself as a part of the powerfully perceived caretakers. The alter ego refers to that sector of the child's experience in which the other sustains the self by providing the reassuring sense of human contact and sameness; i.e., the feeling that one is among others who are essentially like oneself.

All three self-selfobject relations are sustained by parental empathy. That is, as normal parents we understand and respond to the child's wish to have us mirror its grandiosity and exhibitionism. For the toddler, we are a part of the child and exist to mirror its sense of power, entitlement and omnipotence. Our empathy thus helps the child sustain these infantile forms of self esteem. We sustain the child's alter-ego, with its wishes for sameness and contact, by providing a continuous and consistent interactive environment of human sensory impressions. Finally, as normal parents we understand the child's wish to have us available as targets to idealize and merge with during those times it is in need of soothing and calming. We sustain the child's self-esteem by granting its wishes to use us as targets for idealization and blissful merger.

As normal parents or caretakers, we will have inevitable lapses in our empathic responsiveness to the child's wishes in these three sectors of the infantile self. It is to be hoped that these lapses will be neither traumatic nor chronic. If these lapses are manageable, reality will begin to intrude on the

nursery in phase-appropriate ways that the toddler can handle. In this way, our failures in empathy will promote a gradual breakup of the infantile self-selfobject relations and their gradual reconstruction as more reality based percepts.

Thus, development of the self proceeds along three lines: grandiosity, alter ego and idealization. The infantile grandiose self-selfobject in the growing child becomes more focussed in its demands for mirroring, such that one now observes more phase-appropriate assertiveness in the wish for attention. The alter ego self-selfobject relation, with its earlier infantile wishes for the mere, but reassuring, presence of others, becomes the more mature wish to work and play along side the parents in a kind of apprenticeship through which the child's native abilities are nurtured. Likewise, the cruder forms of the idealized parental imago, with its wishes for merger characteristic of the toddler, mature into healthy admiration for the actual qualities of the caretakers, and later, for other adults. As the child develops, the self becomes increasingly capable of empathy in the perception of others. Others become less extensions of the self who fulfill archaic wishes for mirroring, twinship and idealizing, but as separate others who have inner lives of their own.

Adolescence is a critical stage in the transformation of the self as the person prepares for adulthood (Wolf, Gedo and Terman, 1972). It is here that the normal child begins to further consolidate the self along the three lines of development. The

adult form of grandiosity is approached when infantile exhibitionism and childhood assertiveness are transformed by the adolescent into healthy ambition. That is, ambition is the normal narcissistic wish of the adult to experience the mirroring of others for socially constructive performances and other accomplishments. In the alter ego line the wish to experience oneself as a kind of "chip off the old block" fades during adolescence. It is replaced by the more independent and confident use of one's developing abilities. In adulthood the important sense of alikeness is provided in relations with others who share the same values or group membership. In the idealizing line mature goals or ideals provide the gyroscope for the ambitions of the grandiose self. It is the responsibility of the adults with whom the adolescent has contact and the culture in which he or she lives to provide age appropriate experiences that strenthen the development of healthy ambition, sustain the sense of alikeness or human belonging, and make ideals available from which the youngster can fashion mature goals. With the availability of such experiences, the youngster has the opportunity to become an adult with a firm, cohesive self.

When lapses in parental empathy are traumatic, or when the parents are chronically unempathic, the child suffers a severe narcissistic injury in one or more areas of the self. In such cases, the child is at risk for developing defects in the self. A narcissistic injury is experienced in a variety of painful ways. All of us have suffered the pain of shame, embarrassment,

humiliation or simply the sense of depletion. For those of us without serious forms of self pathology, we experience a marked drop in self esteem as a accompaniment to the above affects. We may experience anger as well.

However, for more serious cases, one can also observe severe depression, serious work inhibitions, sexual acting out, rage and violent behavior, hypochondriacal reactions, fantasies of power or of union, alcohol and drug abuse, and more. Suffice it to say, these phenomena are urgent attempts to directly defend against, or to compensate for, the defect in the self (Patton and Robbins, 1982).

The defect in the self can reside, then, in the grandiose, the alter ego or the idealizing self-selfobject relation. The earlier the assault, the more severe the problem. To protect the self from further erosion at the hands of an unempathic environment, the child becomes fixated on the more infantile forms of the self-object, rigidly protecting it from dissolution with a variety of defenses and behaviors. The problem is that the self and its selfobjects do not change with time and remain vulnerable because of their archaic nature. The adult who is still prone to crude bouts of center staging to assure him or herself of greatness is likely to receive criticism rather than mirroring approval. Or the adult who longs for the reassuring sense of alikeness with others will be at risk. Similarly, the adult who still longs for closeness or union with the strength or perfection of others is bound to be severely disappointed.

Because infantile narcissistic wishes in the adult are difficult, if not impossible, for others to meet, the self of the person is in a chronic state of disharmony or enfeeblement.

Many of Kohut's ideas about the person and about the principles of psychological treatment have direct application to our work with clients in counseling (cf. Patton and Robbins, 1982). Time does not permit a discussion of their relevance here. Suffice it to say, however, that the counseling psychologist will find Kohut's central theoretical ideas, his definition and use of the concept of empathy, the role of the defenses in protecting self-esteem and the narcissistic transferences very useful.

Clients with less severe forms of disharmony in the self respond reasonably quickly to the counselor's attempts to engage them in a working alliance; they surface material relevant to locating in which sector of the self the trouble resides; and they become curious enough to try to understand themselves in the context of their relationship with us. In brief, the client's narcissistic use of the counselor is not something to be squelched, but rather, something to be understood and used to promote the client's growth.

A Program of Research

The relevance of some of Kohut's ideas for research in counseling psychology can be illustrated through a program of research we have had underway for several years now. It has been our interests in counseling from the perspective of

psychoanalysis, generally, and psychoanalytic self-psychology, specifically, and in scale construction methodology that have formed the intellectual traditions on which our research is based. Our major goals have included the investigation of the counseling process, not only to better understand it, but also to evaluate it's effectiveness. To date, we have employed a multivariate scale construction strategy (Patton, 1981; Robbins and Patton, in press) to model the counseling process in which raters are used to assess elements of our model. As well, we have developed a number of client self-report measures. In this way we hope to be able to obtain observations of process and outcome variables from both raters and participants, and with the further hope that such observations are related to each other.

Four studies will be described briefly to illustrate our use of Kohut's ideas. These studies have resulted in the development of 17 theoretically derived scales using the central concepts of grandiosity, alter ego and idealization. Figure 2 shows the scale names, the scale type -- either rating or self-report -- and the Kohutian construct from which each scale was derived.

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place Figure 2 here

Our first attempt involved developing 10 rating scales for one of the five dimensions of our multivariate model of counseling from the Utah Counseling Outcomes Project (UCOP) (Patton, 1981). The dimension is called the Client Cohesion of

Self Schemata and its scales were developed using Thurstonian methods of scale construction (Patton, Connor and Scott, 1982; Scott and Patton, 1983). Each of the 10 scales consists of a continuum of severity with eight descriptive anchor points whose interval values were empirically derived. Table 1 shows the scale names and brief definitions, along with the scale reliabilities, and the interrater reliability and agreement estimates for each.

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place Table 1 here

The first three scales are derived from the grandiosity construct; scale number four we now define as representing the alter ego construct; scales five, six and seven are from the idealization construct; and scales eight, nine and ten represent other functions of the self posited by Kohut. The initial scale reliabilities, or estimates of internal consistency, for nine of the 10 scales were very high. Composite reliabilities for the average of three raters were moderate to high, indicating acceptability for their use in research. However, rater agreement was low to moderate which contraindicates any clinical use of the scales at this time. For these scales, it is the rater's task to listen to an audio-taped counseling interview and then rate the client by using the anchor-point definitions to place the client on the scale continuum. The advantage of our empirically derived interval scale values resides in their

utility for measuring client change over time. That is, any change in the ratings between two or more points during counseling is a known quantity. The disadvantage is that use of these scales requires raters who are knowledgeable about Kohut's theory and trained to apply that knowledge with the use of the scales.

Our second study (Robbins and Patton, 1985) involved developing two 10 item self-report scales using the concepts of grandiosity and idealization for primary application with a college population. These scales, called Superiority and Goal Instability, were seen to possess good psychometric qualities by virtue of the estimates of scale reliability and concurrent and construct validity. Moreover, the scales proved to be good predictors of college students' ability to formulate and pursue career plans following enrollment in career development classes. As well, the goal instability scale was a good predictor of the academic achievement of students in learning skills classes (Scott and Robbins, 1985.). Table 2 illustrates some of the characteristics of these two scales.

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place Table 2 here

At the present time, Shreve and Patton (1986) have underway the construction of three self-report scales developed by using Kohut's concept of the self-selfobject relation. The difference in these scales from the previous Robbins and Patton (1985)

scales is two-fold. First, by using the self-selfobject relations concept we are necessarily having to write items from the client's phenomenal perspective rather than from a behavioral or "objective standpoint". The self-selfobject concept refers to a sector of the person's experience in which others are perceived to sustain the self in its grandiose, alter ego and idealizing sectors. Second, this latest effort includes our incorporation of the alter ego concept as the last major addition Kohut (1984) made to his theory before his death. It was not available to us in our previous research and is found only in Kohut's (1984) posthumous work, How Does Analysis Cure?.

Using a sample of 371 college students, the results of our initial item analyses indicated good internal consistency for the three rationally derived scales. The subsequent factor analysis of the remaining items indicated a total of ten independent factors. Of these, the first three had the strongest eigenvalues and the largest number of items with moderate to high factor loadings. Consequently, these first three factors were examined and given scale names as follows: Dissimilarity, Status Seeking and Attention Seeking. The first scale represents the alter ego concept, and the latter two are aspects of grandiosity. Interestingly, idealization has not emerged as a significant factor in these initial analyses, and on the whole, these scales need considerably more work to make them comparable to the Robbins and Patton (1985) scales.. Table 3 illustrates some of

the characteristics of these three scales.

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place Table 3 here

We are also able to report estimates of concurrent validity from the correlations between these latter three scales and the Superiority and Goal Instability scales, along with the correlations between our measures and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1979), and the Crowne-Marlowe Social Desirability Index (1960). These results are reported in Table 4. The three Shreve and Patton (1986) scales show moderate, but significant correlations with self-esteem, as would be expected. Their correlations with Social Desirability are low in each case. The intercorrelations among these three scales (.29 to .41) suggest that the participants' scores on them are relatively independent of each other. Some evidence of concurrent validity for the three scales is indicated from their correlations with the Goal Instability and Superiority scales. Superiority correlates -.23 with Dissimilarity, and -.58 with Attention Seeking, as would be hoped. However, Status Seeking and Superiority correlate only -.12, which is contrary to expectation. As well, because we did not identify any cluster of items from the idealization construct in the Shreve and Patton (1986) study, the moderate correlations between Goal Instability (from the idealization construct) and

Dissimilarity and Status Seeking is somewhat surprising.

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place Table 4 here

The final work to be mentioned today is our study of adolescent narcissism (Lapan and Patton, 1986). In this study we developed two self-report, forced-choice scales using the concepts of grandiosity and idealization. We administered 95 items to both hospitalized and non-hospitalized adolescents, and then reduced the 95 to 23 by item analyses and factor analysis. The resulting scales were named Pseudoautonomy and Peer Group Dependence. The means on both scales for the psychiatrically hospitalized adolescents were significantly higher than those for the non-hospitalized adolescents, and both scales were significant predictors of group membership. The attempt to classify adolescents into their correct group (i.e, hospitalized or non-hospitalized) on the basis of their scale scores was correct 73% of the time. Some of these results are reported in Table 5.

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place Table 5 here

With each of these studies we have expanded our understanding of Kohut's (1984; 1977) psychology of the self. It is a useful theory that affords the researcher in counseling psychology a clinically relevant guide to the formulation of

empirically answerable questions about counselors, clients and the counseling process. Each of our scales requires further psychometric work before they are appropriate for clinical use. However, their initial psychometric qualities are sufficient for further research on counseling at this stage, and this is the endeavor we hope to move to in the near future.

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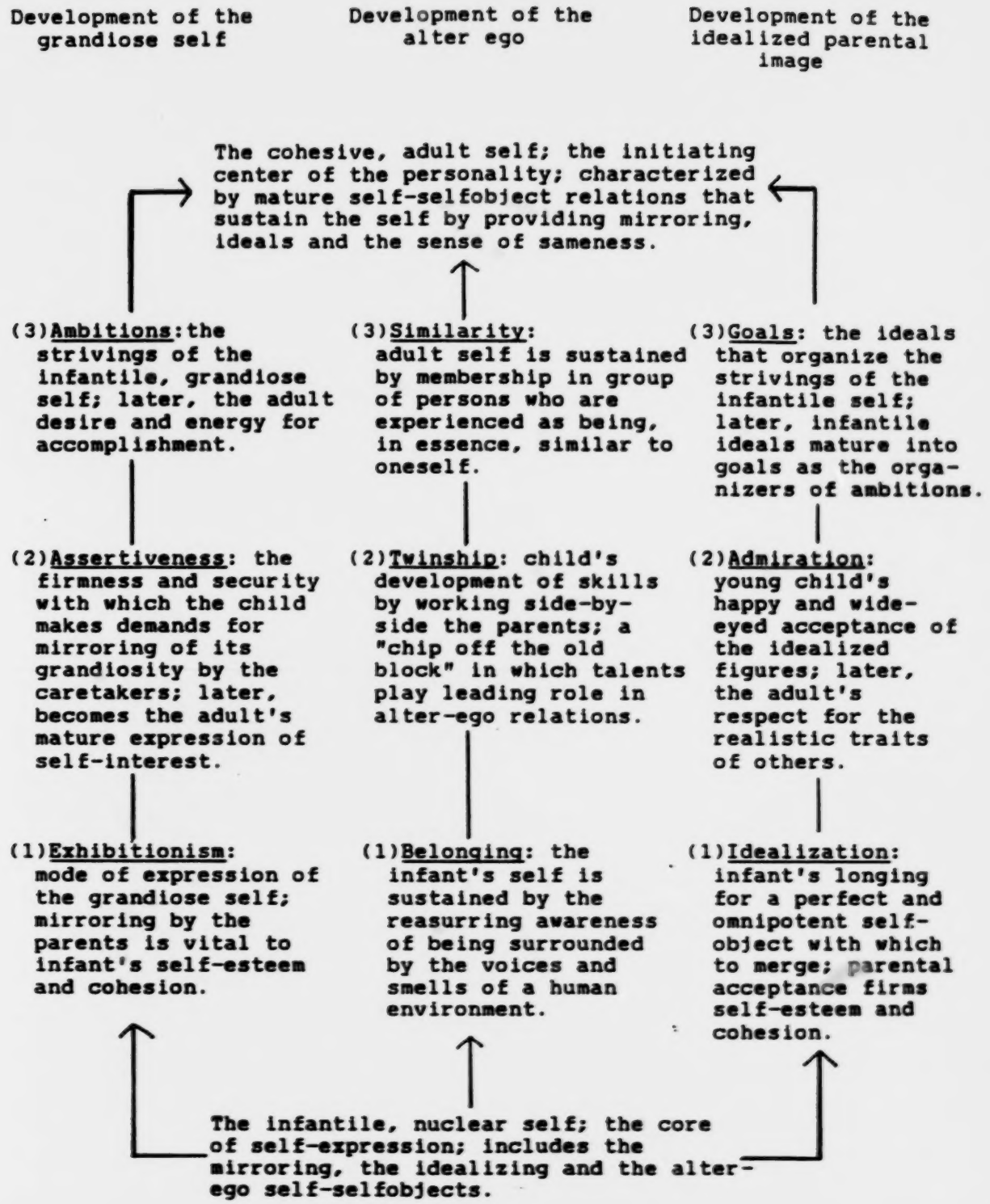
Development of the grandiose self
Development of the alter ego
Development of the idealized parental image
The cohesive, adult self; the initiating center of the personality; characterized by mature self-selfobject relations that sustain the self by providing mirroring, ideals and the sense of sameness.
(3)Ambitions: the strivings of the infantile, grandiose self; later, the adult desire and energy for accomplishment.
(3)Similarity: adult self is sustained by membership in group of persons who are experienced as being, in essence, similar to oneself.
(3)Goals: the ideals that organize the strivings of the infantile self; later, infantile ideals mature into goals as the organizers of ambitions.
(2)Assertiveness: the firmness and security with which the child makes demands for mirroring of its grandiosity by the caretakers; later, becomes the adult's mature expression of self-interest.
(2)Twinship: child's development of skills by working side-by-side the parents; a "chip off the old block" in which talents play leading role in alter-ego relations.
(2)Admiration: young child's happy and wide-eyed acceptance of the idealized figures; later, the adult's respect for the realistic traits of others.
(1)Exhibitionism: mode of expression of the grandiose self; mirroring by the parents is vital to infant's self-esteem and cohesion.
(1)Belonging: the infant's self is sustained by the reasurring awareness of being surrounded by the voices and smells of a human environment.
(1)Idealization: infant's longing for a perfect and omnipotent self-object with which to merge; parental acceptance firms self-esteem and cohesion.
The infantile, nuclear self; the core of self-expression; includes the mirroring, the idealizing and the alter-ego self-selfobjects.

Figure 1. The Parallel lines of development of the self.

Ratings	Self-Report
GRANDIOSITY	
Self-Presentation Mode	Superiority
Assertiveness	Status Seeking
Ambitions	Attention Seeking
	Pseudoautonomy
ALTER EGO	
Use of Abilities	Dissimilarity
IDEALIZATION	
Differentiation from Others	Goal Instability
Admiration of Others	Peer-Group Dependence
Goals	
OTHER FUNCTIONS OF THE SELF	
Empathy	
Locus of Self Esteem Regulation	
Tension Tolerance	

Figure 2. Scales Derived from Kohut's Theory of the Self

Table 1

Scale Definitions and Estimates of Scale Reliability and of Rater Reliability and Agreement for the 10 Self-Schemata Rating Scales

Scale	Scale Reliability (W)	Rater Reliability (Intraclass)	Rater Agreement (T)
1. Self-Presentation Mode: from exhibitionism, to restraint and sensitivity.	.83	.76	.38
2. Assertiveness: from passivity or physical aggression, to effective expression of rights.	.79	.74	.63
3. Ambitions: from lack of will to succeed, to eager pursuit of plans for accomplishment.	.75	.86	.57
4. Use of Abilities: from refusal to use or develop talents, to use of abilities in goal striving.	.79	.80	.51
5. Differentiation from others: from parasitic merger with others, to meaningful differentiation.	.80	.62	.32
6. Admiration of others: from addiction to idealized others, to comfort in giving praise if due.	.57	.53	.51
7. Goals: from commitment to mature purposes, to no sense of direction.	.85	.77	.63
8. Empathy: from exquisite sensitivity to others, to gross insensitivity to others.	.86	.76	.51
9. Locus of Self-Esteem Regulation: from shattered by criticism, to acceptance without devaluing self.	.75	.70	.63
10. Tension Tolerance: from urgent attempts to discharge tension, to channeling tension in creativity.	.88	.66	.45

Table 2

The Goal Instability and Superiority Scales

Summary Statistics	Scale	
	Goal Instability	Superiority
Mean item factor loadings	.54	.51
Cumulative percent of variance	49.80	36.60
Alpha	.81	.76
Test-retest	.76	.80
Correlation between scales	.12	
N = 133		

Scale Descriptions

Goal Instability: The set of 10 items appears to represent a lack of goal directedness and work inhibitions: e.g.,

A. "I don't seem to get going on anything important".

B. "It's easier for me to start than to finish projects."

Superiority: The set of 10 items appear to center on the person's arrogant opinion of self as superior to others; a kind of exaggerated self esteem: e.g.,

A. "I could show up my friends if I wanted to."

B. "My looks are one of the things that attract others to me."

Table 3

The Dissimilarity, Status Seeking, and Attention Seeking Scales

	Scale		
	1 Dissimilarity	2 Status Seeking	3 Attention Seeking
Scale Means	28.8	30.6	27.9
Cumulative percent of variance	28.8	7.0	6.0
Alpha	.88	.85	.77
Correlations among the scales	.41** (1&2)	.29** (1&3)	.30** (2&3)

N = 371; ** p < .01.

Scale Descriptions

Dissimilarity: The 10 items appear to represent the person's need for the presence of others who are essentially like him or her: e.g.,

A. "Almost no one feels the same way I do."

B. "I feel like I don't have much in common with other people."

Status Seeking: The 10 items selected for this scale seem to suggest the person's longing to be special in relation to others; e.g.,

A. "I feel that I'm not admired for my accomplishments."

B. "I wish I had someone who was proud of me."

Attention Seeking: The ten items selected for this scale suggest the person belives him/herself to be entitled to attention; e.g.,

A. "I love to show off to others."

B. "I'm bothered when others don't pay more attention to me."

Table 4

Concurrent Validity Estimates for Goal Instability, Superiority, Dissimilarity, Status Seeking and Attention Seeking Scales

Scale	N	Rosenberg Self-Esteem	N	Social Desirability Index
Goal Instability	130	-.64***	226	-.32**
Superiority	130	.09	226	-.06
Dissimilarity	371	.56***	371	.17***
Status Seeking	371	.44***	371	.07
Attention Seeking	371	.59***	371	.16***

	N	Goal Instability	Superiority
Dissimilarity	371	-.48***	-.23***
Status Seeking	371	-.44***	-.12*
Attention Seeking	371	-.22***	-.58***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Scale Descriptions and Summary of Group Classification Results for the Psuedoautonomy and Peer Group Dependence Scales

		Predicted Group			
		Hospitalized		Nonhospitalized	
Actual Group	no. of cases	no.	%	no.	%
Hospitalized	112	68	61	44	39
Nonhospitalized	118	19	16	99	84

note: based on 230 cases. Percent correctly classified = 73.

Scale Descriptions

Pseudoautonomy: the eight items on this scale appear to represent the adolescent's hypersensitivity to and defensive independence of others who are perceived as critical and unresponsive to his or her presence and self expression; e.g.,

A. "I do what I want."

B. "Adults stick their noses into what is my business."

Peer Group Dependence: The eight items on this scale represent the adolescent's defensive attachment to others as a substitute for his/her own internal ideals or goals; e.g.,

A. "Other people's judgments about me usually influence the way I feel about myself."

B. "When friends cut me down, I try to be more like what they want."